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MDT is an international co-production platform and a leading venue for contemporary choreography and performance situated in a reconstructed torpedo workshop in the Stockholm city center. MDT has since 1986 supported and collaborated with Swedish and international emerging artists. MDT is supported by Kulturrådet, Kulturförvaltningen Stockholm stad and Kulturförvaltningen Stockholms läns landsting.

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Publication: text: Danjel Andersson; drawing: Olga Prader (Paris);
design: Jonas Williamsson; typeface: Brown, Hermes; paper: Cyclus
Offset 80g, 100% recycled; printing & binding: Uniprint (Tallin)

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MDT — THE PLACE TO BE
Danjel Andersson, director

When I start writing this I am in PAF — Performing Arts Forum. The intellectual critical forum created by Dutch theater director JAN RITSEMA in an old scary convent with bats flying around and aggressive peacocks poking in the garden. PAF is situated 150 km from Paris in a little village called St Erme. The rooms are small but inexpensive, the generosity generally high. Here you find large dance studios with torn floors, a media library, interesting books lying around. From a safe secure Swedish perspective, it is exotic and somehow real. The feeling of community is so intense that cult is almost the right word. The discussions after each presentation or showing by the guests are philosophical in a way that they exclude you if you haven't read the latest fad. This is not a place for me. I am the enemy. My job is to invite artists to perform in my festivals or here in MDT, so if I criticize in this forum it's the same as saying I won't buy this or that. PAF is the perfect place to be, however, for young artists that want to learn how to intellectualize around their work. The critical thresholds are high (if you are an artist) and people try to understand each other. The great thing is, now I am here, that there are many Swedish artists mainly from the dance field here and this marks a significant change.

I will in this text argue that Sweden needs to start co-producing. And MDT is the place for it. In Europe it's an impossibility not to look for co-producers. A choreographer has to seek partners to realize a project. That's the way it is everywhere for almost everybody. But Sweden have created a system that contributes with almost enough. Almost enough rehearsal spaces, almost enough money to cover the costs for independent projects and presenters, like MDT. We get just enough to pay the staff, the rent, but almost no funding covers inviting guest performances. No, I am not complaining, it's a description. I think everybody in the Swedish dance scene would agree. (Maybe not GUNILLA HEILBORN, ÖRJAN ANDERSSON and CRISTINA CAPRIOLI, they got more than enough this year, but with no heads up, so they can only do what they already planned).

The situation in the theater world is on the other hand quite different. They have more than enough. Too much, even. This is because we have theater factory ambitions in combination with the fact that we have two parallel systems: The regional repertoire theaters and RIKSTEATERN (National Touring Company), both with the same task, to provide the whole country with high quality theater. There are a lot of positive arguments on this topic we normally focus on. I agree with most, but from an international perspective there is one thing we tend to forget. What these two systems do is isolate Sweden's theater scene. Both of them are very local. Almost all touring is reserved to the heavily subsidized RIKSTEATERN. But they are not allowed to tour to the major cities since we put so much money into stationary repertory theater there. So they tour to the smallest villages and towns (they also cheat and show some of their work in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö). Basically, if RIKSTEATERN does not produce you, you don't tour in Sweden. That is State Monopoly. And if you don't tour you need to produce a repertory that will attract a big enough local audience. And since the independent companies in Sweden, for example our room mate TEATER GALEASEN, do not tour, Sweden have not seen the necessity to produce touring platforms for theater or performance in the major cities, such as art centers, open venues or festivals.

Back to dance. Theater have grave problems, we need to reinvent the whole system if we want change. Dance however is in a much better position. Swedish dance is also isolated but for different reasons. In the international field of venues and festivals in Europe, the Swedish scene has been, for a long time, mysteriously absent. Our big names outside the institutions are very much local heroes, like the founder of MDT MARGARETHA ÅSBERG (outside of Sweden

people simply don't know her work.) Or PER JONSSON. Or CRISTINA CAPRIOLI and so on. The few names that are known are MATS EK, and mostly through his work with the CULLBERG BALLET (the only international part of RIKSTEATERN), and the living tour-man himself MÅRTEN SPÅNGBERG—but that's not thanks to the system. I think it's sad that our noteworthy tradition is unknown abroad.

So why? I hear this question a lot. Why has the Swedish dance field been so absent in the international performing arts world? (Not only in physical sense, invited to festivals, but also in theoretical sense, in texts, thinking about the work). Partly for the above mentioned reasons, urgency—monetary urgency. If you get just enough money to put your show together and inexpensive (subsidized) places to rehearse, then your only problem is where to show it. So the choreographer turns to us, the presenters. We are the gatekeepers. The artists already have all the funding they need. Now they want a platform to present their work. This is also why we cannot talk about curators among Swedish presenters; they have no budget to distill a program that they can represent. They have to wait until they know what the committee in the funding bodies decide—and then make a program. So most of the time the choreographers get a yes when they ask if they can perform in the theaters. The only exception to this rule that I know of is DANSENS HUS (and they are not allowed to co-produce). So one of the novelties when MDT restart with me as director is that we, most of the time will say no to finished, funded projects, even if we don't have the money to make a program. You wanna know why? I'll tell you why.

MDT has a lot. We have two studios, a nice stage, fantastic office and not to forget enough money to pay up to five people all year round. This is what we have in monetary status. I am not saying it is too little. It's great. In the current system, where all the production money goes directly to the choreographers and we provide the stage and rehearsal spaces, it's very hard to make an urgent program. If I want to call myself a curator then I should be able to control my program. Today my tool is to say no—to say no to the choreographers and the projects that the state for one reason or the other decided to support. And instead give our support to, in every way that we can, the artists we think have the kind of urgency we believe in. So from now on as long as I am here we will start with the artist and the idea. We will discuss it and help getting the right funding for it, and perhaps the most important aspect of it all, we will believe in the work and support it all the way. We will develop solid co-production systems, networks and connections so when you are presented at MDT you also tour, nationally and internationally. You might just perform in this house two to four times, but you will perform the piece a lot—in the co-producers venues, and hopefully touring a long time. We are aiming at the problem that independent choreographers only perform maximum ten times in Sweden, most of them only show their performances three or four times. And this is a monumental problem because most pieces are not even completed by their forth performance. So all the money the taxpayers provide is most of the time put into investigations, rather than art making.

How will we do this? And what will the audience get to see? First the how, then the what. We will present an artist more than once. First time we might present a finished work and invite colleagues we trust and respect to come and see it, give feedback, perhaps in a written form. This will lead to co-production. We, three to ten presenters, will help and present the production and try our best to give the artists as solid a platform as possible. This we will achieve by continuously present artists that we believe in. MDT will build an audience for them and a solid financial ground for them to stand on without the dependency of a yes or a no from the large Swedish funding bodies. You, the beloved audience, will then get to see a variety of interesting Swedish works, at first not known to most of you. You will also learn to know work from other cultural contexts, since we also will start co-producing works with our colleagues around the world. In this mix we will also throw in some already well known international acclaimed artists

that will help us define what is urgent to address today within the fields of contemporary choreography and performance. You see? This is why it is important to co-produce. This will in an instant open a very closed structure, help us see what is going on outside of our country but also efficiently introduce what our emerging artists are doing to other cultural contexts than the already given.

Now it is time for a few shout outs and then I will tell you who are supporting us and whom we support. That is, the program.

The depressing description above of the Swedish dance scene is already, prior to our work at MDT rapidly changing thanks to lots of intelligent strategies. One is a given: IDP—The International Dance Program—a state initiative to open the doors to the international field of co-production. (This is the main reason to why there were so many Swedes at PAF. All the things ANNA EFRAIMSSON are doing there, is and will be of major importance). The new attitude at DOCH (University of Dance and Circus) is utterly important. EFVA LILJAS courage and straight to the pointness is impressive. MÅRTEN SPÅNGBERG and his two-year master program “MY CHOREOGRAPHY” is putting Swedish emerging choreography on the map internationally. Spångberg is generously offering his contacts also through the network structure INPEX, with several projects like the “SWEDISH DANCE HISTORY” books that has been launched in many countries, and also made Sweden look like a happening place. What ANNA KOCH is doing at WELD is amazing. With limited funding she has established her laboratory as the place to go if you are in to artistic research on an international level. These initiatives plus my own festivals PERFECT PERFORMANCE and TUPP has in a very short and intense time sent shivers all over the performing arts field. So this, in combination with VIRVE SUTINENS work at the DANSENS HUS and IETM, and the new profile at MDT will make a huge difference in the mode of production and communication of our whole scene. Outside of Stockholm area I mainly want to focus on INKONST, in Malmö with a great program, PUSTERVIK in Gothenburg (even though their tightness to Riksteatern), the MADE festival in Umeå and of course the GOTHENBURG THEATRE AND DANCE FESTIVAL.

I know what you are thinking; lots of smoke but no cigar. What will MDT do? Well, all this is a way of helping you read the program. We want you to look at it as a way to open very firmly closed taps. We will present three categories of work. All interesting, all urgent, all made by artists we believe strongly in. We will present some of the internationally acclaimed and some of the most interesting choreographers around such as Norwegian METTE EDVARDESEN and Danish METTE INGVARSEN. We are super proud that they will come with their new pieces and that we also co-produced them. This fall you will be able to see two works by XAVIER LE ROY, he is one of the leading forces in contemporary choreography today and we are very glad to welcome him back to Stockholm, it was a long time since he was here, and we open our season in March with violent and super interesting young performer and choreographer PIETER AMPE who will present himself with his first two choreographies both of them made in close collaboration with GUILHERME GARRIDO. The newest piece is called “STILL STANDING YOU” is produced by CAMPO in Ghent, one of my favorite production houses. Names such as these are not just great to present in Stockholm, to you. They will also serve as markers for our colleagues around the globe. When we put Swedish names next to them such as LUNDAHL & SEITL, ROBIN JONSSON, ARON BLOM, SALKA ARDAL ROSENGREN, DANIEL ALMGREN RECÉN, ALMA SÖDERBERG, BJÖRN SÄFSTEN, ANNA KÄLLBLAD, MALIN ELGÁN, DORTE OLESEN. Most of these names are more or less unknown to the Swedish dance scene too. And this led me to the next category: the fresh choreographers that has studied, or had their practices outside of Sweden, that are not in the Swedish system. MDT shall be a bridge. The established choreographers in Sweden should use us to be seen abroad, and the Swedes abroad a way

of presenting themselves here. Some of them more established than others, like JEFTA VAN DINTHER, this is why you don't recognize all the Swedish names. But of course you will also see some familiar faces too. And we will also try to open new doors for them.

When we talk about choreography it's fairly easy to almost always talk about dance. Not in all cases above though. We will also challenge these concepts by working with obvious borderlines to theater or music. Like NINA JEPPSSON who will show two radical performance pieces produced by the theater academy in Stockholm. One project we are hosting that maybe most of all challenges the concept of performance is a piece that will develop at MDT called "THE CURATORS PIECE" by PETRA ZANKI and TEA TUPAJIĆ. In their work they question the whole system of inviting, of experts and curators. They bring a number of Power People on stage, and gets the reluctant curators to question themselves and the whole system – and invite themselves.

We will throughout the year present double-bills. This means basically something extra. You can see a performance on the main stage and one in one of the studios. This is for us to be able to present things unknown to you. So you will on numerous occasions be able to see more than one performance per night. You come to one and get the next one free.

We will fill the year, and especially the summer with lots of residencies. They will all look different and they will make this house come alive. All through the summer there will be parties, mini festivals, showings and meetings.

So as you see changes will be many. All for the better I hope. But none of this can be done without you. So please join the revolution. Pretty Please.

Questionnaire

26 jan 2011 kl. 19:43 skrev "Priit Raud" <priit@tants.ee>:

Of course I have followed the Swedish scene during all my years of working (about 20). The relation has gone with ups and downs, but for me the most important is to follow and to try to understand and relate to it. As with anything else: if you think you know more and better you understand that you do not now much. As being very close to Sweden I hope to get to know better younger artists and maybe alternative artists who are usually not so visible. Especially in last years I'm hearing more about these Swedish artists from Europe!?!

Pr.

(Priit Raud is the director of Kanuti Gildi SAAL in Tallin, Estonia)

2011/1/25 Sally De Kunst <sally@belluard.ch>

As this question lands into my e-mailbox again, I realize that I in general do not think about countries or nations when I consider "a" or "the" performing arts scene... What I like about the field you and I are working in is the cosmopolitanism. Artists or arts practitioners are not necessarily working in the country where they grew up, they move around, to produce, research, present... In that sense I am a child of the fertile, international Belgian soil. Belgium has always been a center for performing artists from everywhere, and therefore I had the luxury to see a lot of very different things, ever since I was young. But to call it "the Belgian (or Flemish) performing arts scene" would maybe be a bit redundant nowadays, in the context of globalism.

To come back to your question however, I'm having a hard time to answer it. I realize that I do not have a close connection to the Swedish Performing Arts Scene. My first personal double check to see if I have certain knowledge about a certain culture would be the question: "How do people drink their coffee?" Because in our united Europe that is - luckily - still quite different everywhere. And I am embarrassed to say it, but I don't know how you drink your coffee in Sweden... Having a relationship to a scene also means, to me, knowing more about the context: about food and politics. And besides being familiar with the bad food habits of Inspector Wallander and knowing that Princess Victoria was allowed to marry her personal fitness trainer, I bluntly have to admit that I am not well informed. I have been to Sweden only once, about 20 years ago. The Swedish artists and art practitioners I know, I met abroad, and our relationships were developing within the cosmopolitanism of our field, and were based on sharing practices and idea's about how to support, produce and present international projects within the given contexts where I and they were or are working in. So the "Swedish Performing Arts scene" I know is in my head part of a bigger, more scattered international picture.

However, it's maybe a good moment to start getting a clearer idea: Danjel, how do you drink your coffee?

Have a nice evening
Sally

(Sally De Kunst is director of the Festival Belluard Bollwerk International in Fribourg, Switzerland)

2011/2/8 DD Dorvillier <dddorvillier@gmail.com>

Ok... it is clear that I know absolutely NOTHING about Swedish choreographers. It's not out of lack of interest, but because I lived and worked in America for 20 years (and never visited Scandinavia) In NYC we have our share of choreographers who I hardly know... I spent all my time either working with people in a studio, going to their shows, or waitressing. I saw Merce Cunningham for the first time in Paris. I did not hear about Pina Bausch until I was 26 years old... after being in NYC for 4 years and making my own dances. I did not know the world outside my immediate dance surroundings until I started to travel, and that first traveling was to Japan 1997... not very close to Sweden.

Funny but Sweden somehow stands out to me as a kind of supporter of dance from other places, but the choreographers from Sweden don't stand out as names in my field of reference at all.

xox
dd

(DD Dorvillier is a choreographer based in Brooklyn, New York)

Från: Tom Bonte <tom@vooruit.be>
Datum: 31 januari 2011 11:10:58 CET

Well, that relationship is very limited. There are few artists known to me that are interesting. Most of the time they have been studying here in Belgium, like Robin Jonsson.

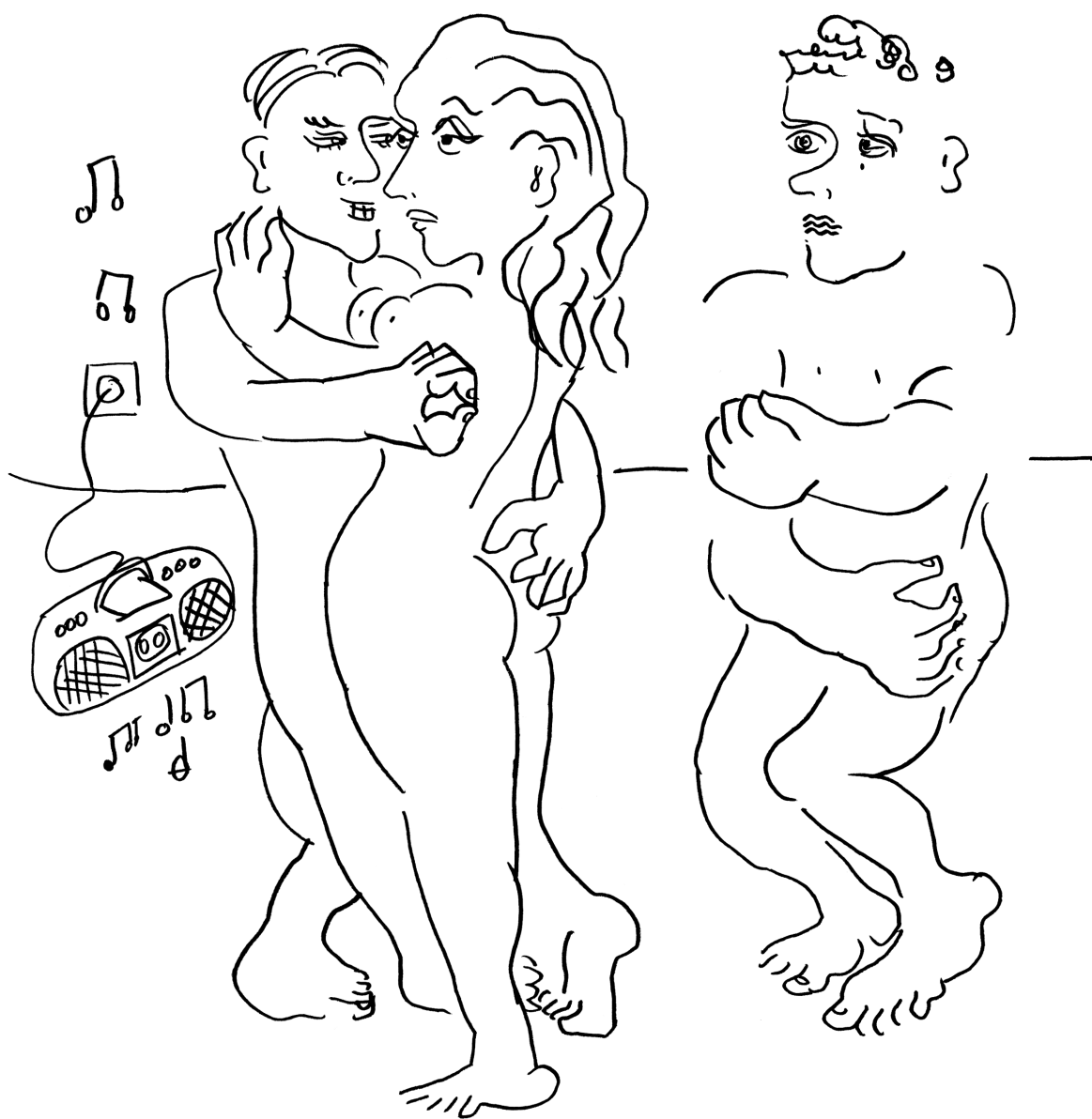
Some of them I got to know through Belgian producers, like Poste Restante... And some of them are working in an international context and often not from Sweden, like Lundahl & Seidl.

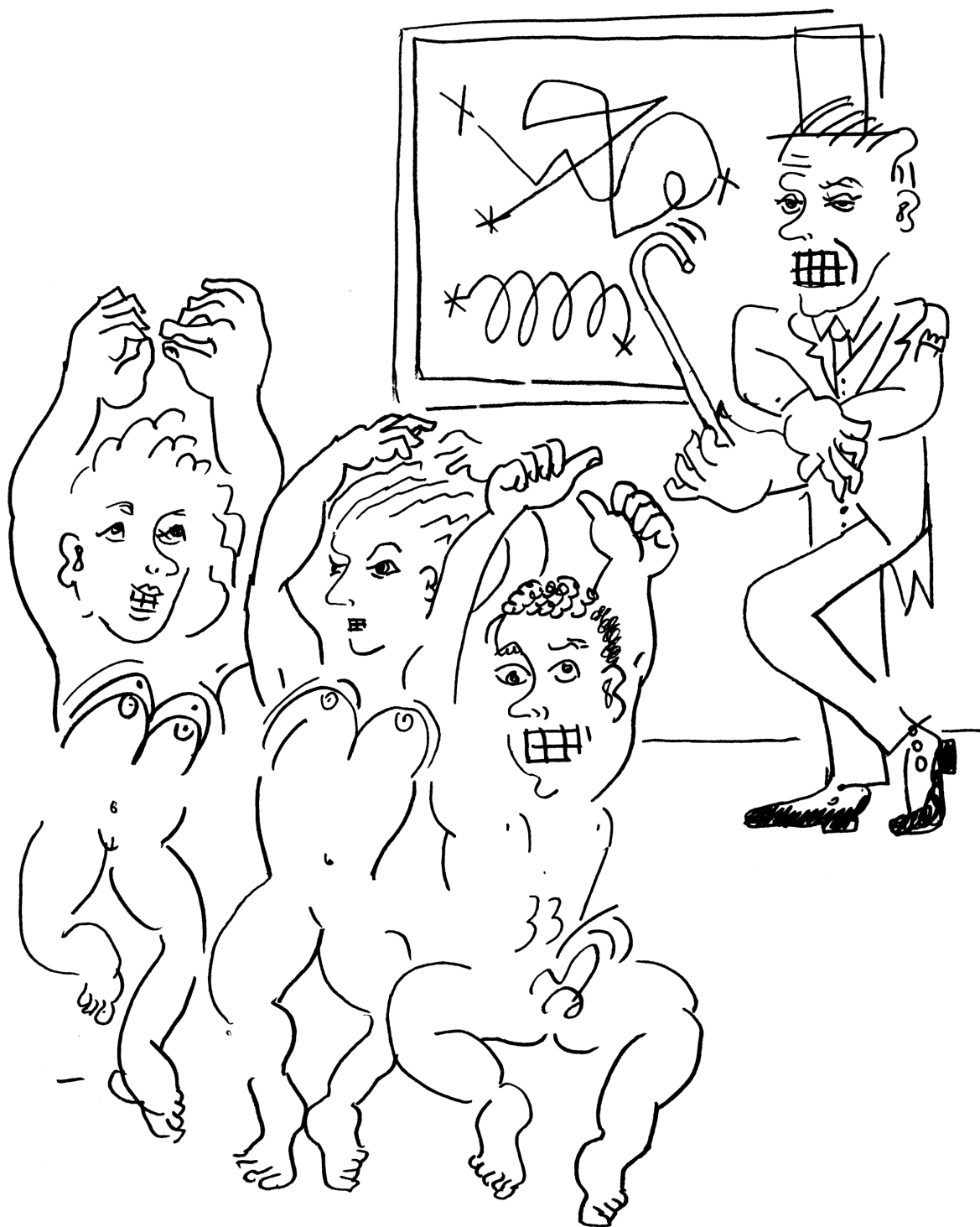
I am very interested in the work of these artists mentioned above, but I do not have the feeling a lot is coming out of the performing arts world in Sweden that I know about...

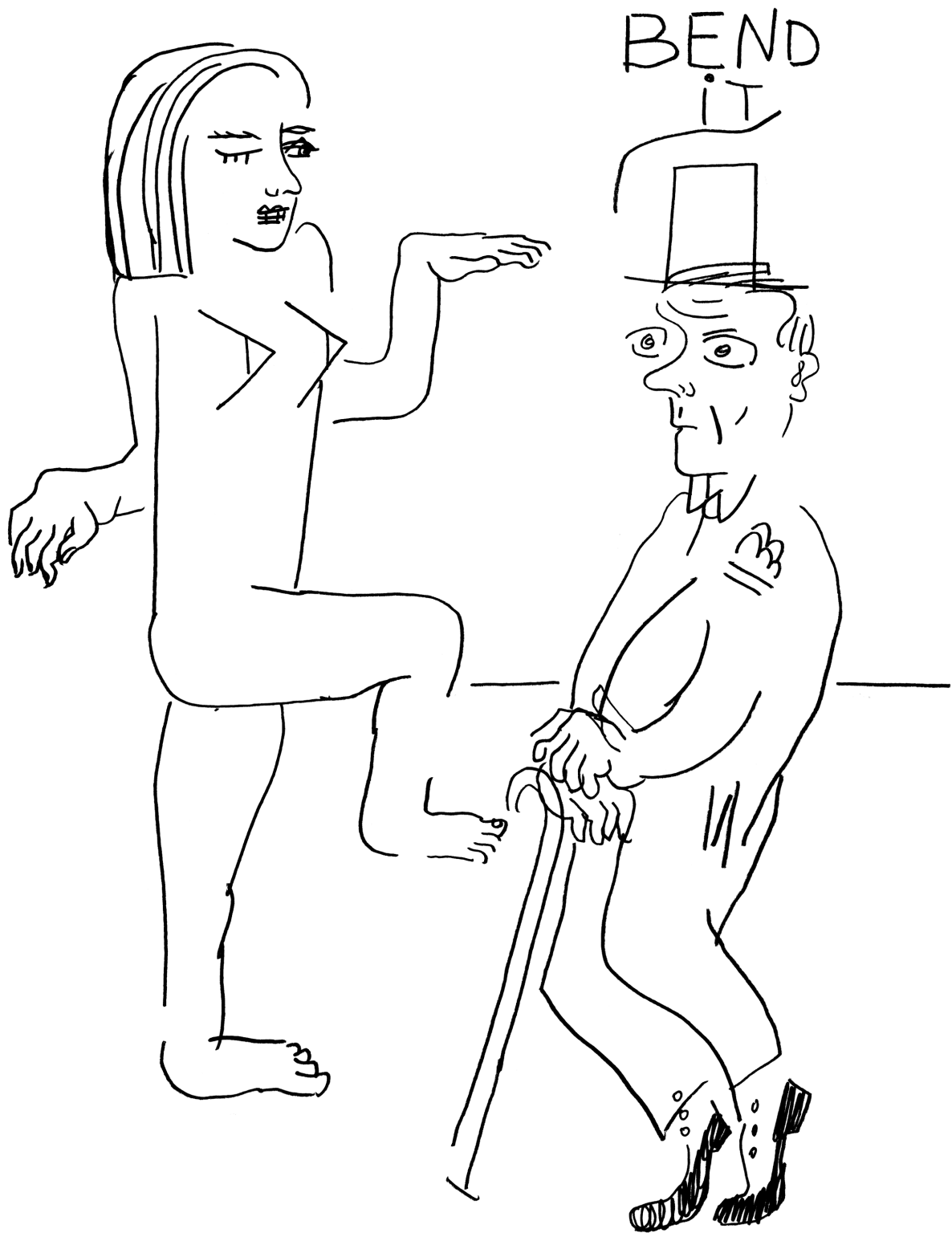
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Tom

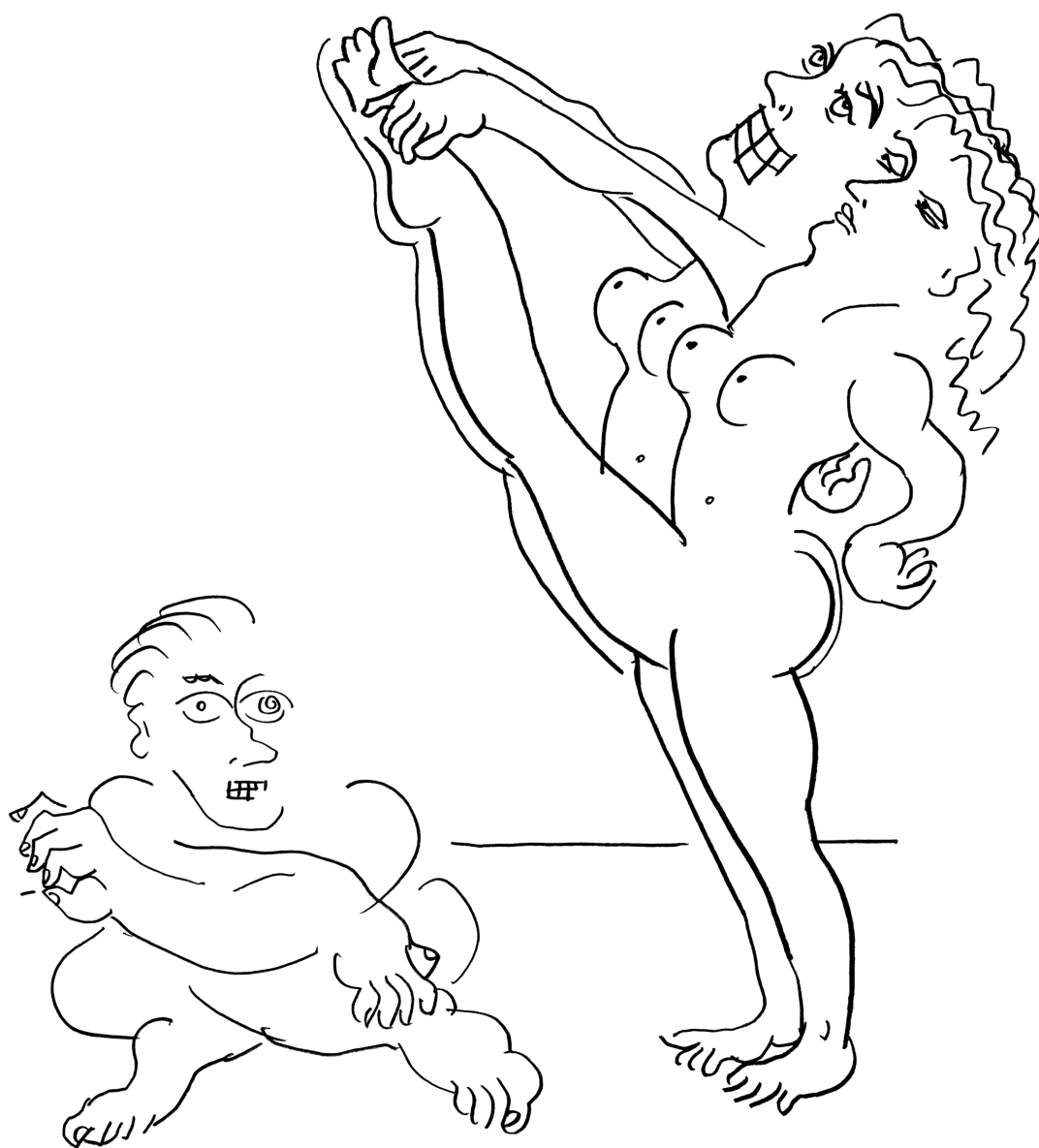
(Tom Bonte is performing arts programmer at Vooruit in Gent)











DUET



M...M...KISSING...



DANCING IS MY CRIME



OLGA